NYSTEACHS.org

The New York State Technical Assistance Center for Homeless Students

Meeting the Unique Learning Needs of Students Exposed to Trauma

How to Apply Trauma-Sensitive Strategies to Improve Academic Outcomes for Students in Temporary Housing

Table of Contents

Introduction

Students in temporary housing often face challenges that go beyond everyday stress and cross the line into toxic stress and trauma. Factors such as homelessness, family instability, substance abuse, domestic violence, untreated mental illness, neglect, or other home-life challenges can all be considered traumatic and will all have a negative impact on a student's physical, mental, and emotional health.

Homelessness and other traumatic experiences can cause students to feel so vulnerable, unsafe, and/or distracted in the classroom, that they are often unavailable to learn. While there is no "quick fix" for helping students in temporary housing to be successful academically, there are specific trauma-sensitive strategies that can improve a child's self-confidence, resiliency, sense of safety, and ultimately, his/her academic achievement.

To that end, **NYS-TEACHS has developed a School Success Framework that is rooted in trauma-sensitive strategies**. The framework includes three essential elements:

- Creating a safe and supportive environment
- Fostering secure attachments to a nurturing adult
- Providing an opportunity to strengthen non-cognitive skills
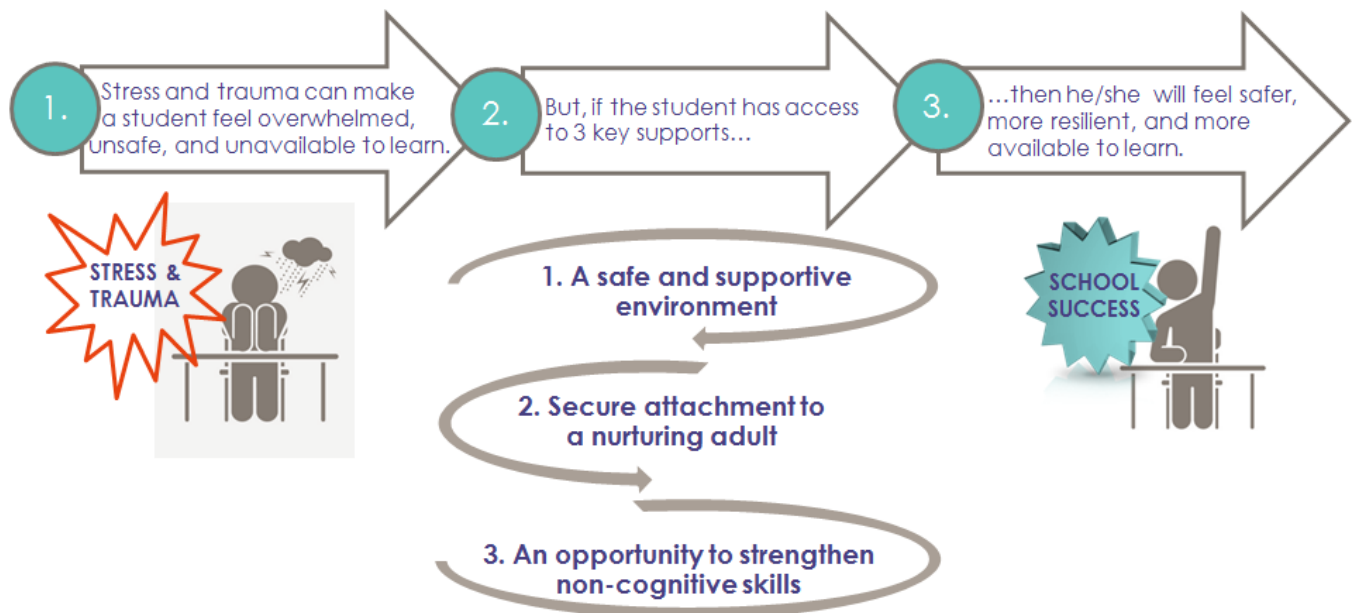
This toolkit is written for McKinney-Vento liaisons, school/district-based staff, and/or anyone else who interacts with students in temporary housing and their families. It provides specific strategies for taking a trauma-sensitive approach with students with the ultimate goal of helping them achieve academic success.

It should be noted that trauma-sensitivity is not a "program" or "treatment." Rather, it is an approach that can and should be used by everyone. You do not need to be a mental health professional. A trauma-sensitive approach is about shifting the question from "what is wrong with you," to "what happened to you?"

Readers are invited to go through each chapter (*i.e. each element*) for overview information and detailed strategies **or to skip ahead to page 24 for an abbreviated version** (*i.e. a matrix of recommended strategies and actions*). The matrix can be used as a reference tool or "cheat sheet" of all the strategies covered in this toolkit. You may want to share the matrix with others during trainings, post a copy in a public place, or use it for yourself as a quick reminder of strategies.

Finally, please visit the NYS-TEACHS [website] for additional resources including research articles, info-briefs, training toolkits, and other learning opportunities related to trauma-sensitivity and the three elements of our school success framework.

Understanding the Impact of Trauma and the Role of Trauma Sensitivity

When a child's housing is unstable, there are many stressors competing for that child's attention and energy. That competition can make the child less available to learn. Additionally, housing instability might be accompanied by other adverse childhood experiences such as abuse, neglect, or family dysfunction which only compounds the challenge of learning.
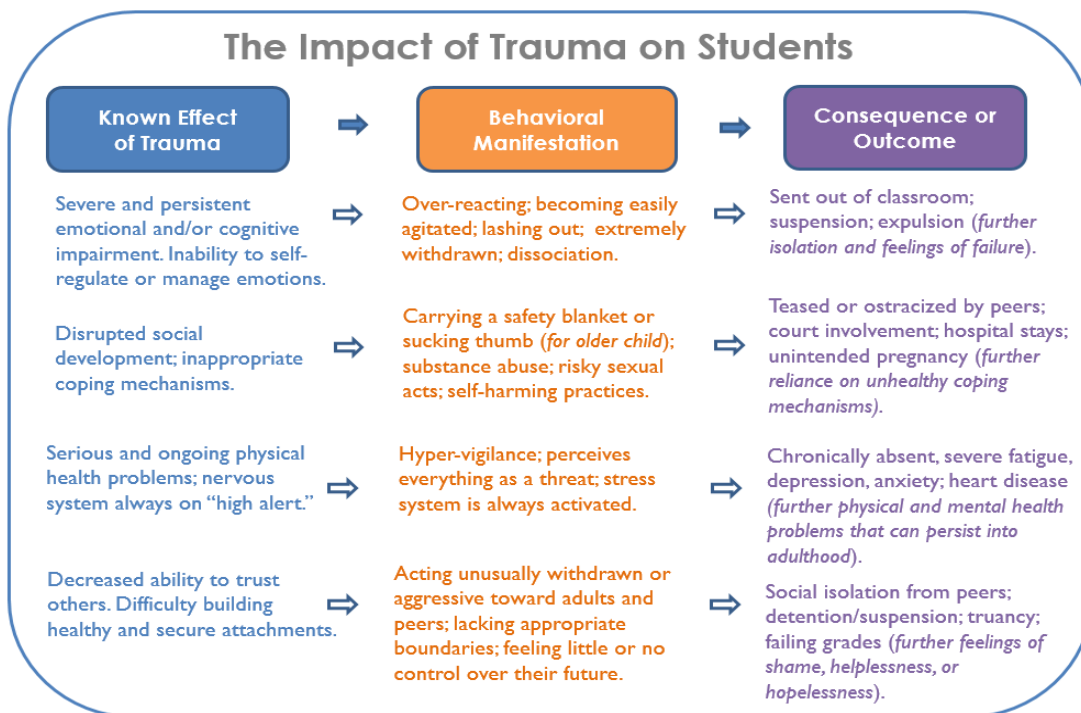
Research shows that 25% of children have already experienced a traumatic event by the age of four[1]. The impact of trauma can be biological, psychological, and/or social and even one experience can negatively affect a student's ability to succeed in school.

Trauma symptoms are:
- Biological
- Psychological
- Social
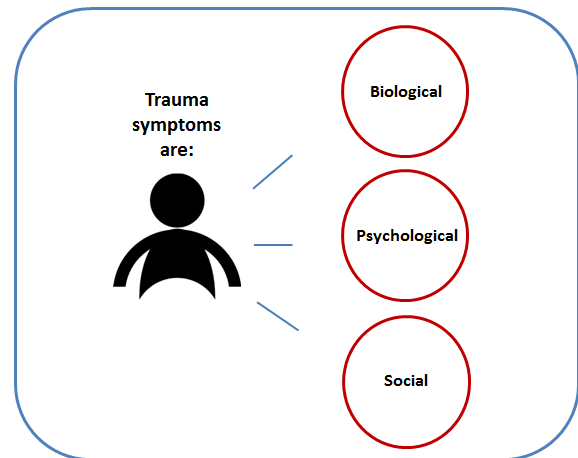
This negative impact is made worse when you consider that traumatic experiences often happen in clusters (*i.e. a student is living in a homeless shelter due to eviction and also has witnessed violence between his parents*).[2] The higher the number of traumatic experiences, the more likely a student is to:

- have a nervous system always on "high alert"
- believe that he/she is inherently "bad" or "stupid"
- believe that people and situations are always untrustworthy or unsafe

In a school setting, the impact of trauma may look like this:

The Impact of Trauma on Students

Known Effect of Trauma	Behavioral Manifestation	Consequence or Outcome
Severe and persistent emotional and/or cognitive impairment. Inability to self-regulate or manage emotions.	Over-reacting; becoming easily agitated; lashing out; extremely withdrawn; dissociation.	Sent out of classroom; suspension; expulsion (*further isolation and feelings of failure*).
Disrupted social development; inappropriate coping mechanisms.	Carrying a safety blanket or sucking thumb (*for older child*); substance abuse; risky sexual acts; self-harming practices.	Teased or ostracized by peers; court involvement; hospital stays; unintended pregnancy (*further reliance on unhealthy coping mechanisms*).
Serious and ongoing physical health problems; nervous system always on "high alert."	Hyper-vigilance; perceives everything as a threat; stress system is always activated.	Chronically absent, severe fatigue, depression, anxiety; heart disease (*further physical and mental health problems that can persist into adulthood*).
Decreased ability to trust others. Difficulty building healthy and secure attachments.	Acting unusually withdrawn or aggressive toward adults and peers; lacking appropriate boundaries; feeling little or no control over their future.	Social isolation from peers; detention/suspension; truancy; failing grades (*further feelings of shame, helplessness, or hopelessness*).

[1] Briggs-Gowan, et al., *Journal of Traumatic Stress, 2010*
[2] Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) Reporter, 2003

However, with a trauma-sensitive approach, these vulnerable students *can* learn and *can* succeed. **Trauma sensitivity refers to services or interactions that address the impact of trauma, not the symptoms**. It takes into account "what happened" to a person and moves away from asking "what is wrong" with a person.

Trauma-sensitive actions include (*but are not limited to*)

- Providing a safe and comforting environment
- Being empathetic
- Avoiding blame or shame
- Focusing on partnership, not control or authority
- Focusing on a person's strengths

While some students exposed to trauma will need professional mental-health services (*i.e. therapy, counseling, etc.*), **trauma sensitivity is an approach that can be used by anyone in any setting**. In a school building or school district, it involves adults using trauma-sensitive strategies to do the following:

- Create a safe and supportive school environment[3]
- Foster secure attachments[4]
- Strengthen a student's non-cognitive skills (*i.e. social-emotional learning*)[5]

As students begin to experience these three positive elements, they may engage more deeply in school, become better able to participate in class, and ultimately, become more available to learn.

---

[3] Trauma Learning and Policy Institute – Massachusetts Advocates For Children, 2014

[4] National Center on Family Homelessness, 2006

[5] National Center on Homeless Education, 2013

Implementing the 3 Essential Elements of the Trauma-Sensitive Schools Framework

The following sections will provide an overview, recommended strategies, and further resources for each of the three essential elements:

SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE ENVIRONMENTS:

Schools strive to be safe and supportive for all students, but in the context of students experiencing homelessness, the terms "safe" and "supportive" take on a new - or at least more expansive - meaning.

When a student feels unsafe or unsupported, he/she will try to get basic needs met in any way necessary. If a teacher or staff member doesn't realize that the student has experienced trauma, certain "survival" behaviors may be misread as laziness, apathy, or intentionally defiant when in fact, the student is reaching out for connection and safety in whatever way he/she knows how.[6]

3 ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

1. A safe and supportive environment

2. Secure attachment to a nurturing adult

3. An opportunity to strengthen non-cognitive skills

In reality, we know that teachers and other school-based staff may not always know which behaviors are a manifestation of trauma. Schools are not going to screen everyone for trauma nor is it appropriate to do so. Rather, it is better to take a trauma-sensitive approach with all students as to not further alienate already traumatized students. In a school setting, "*it is best to start [with] the connection between trauma sensitivity and the positive changes [staff] would like to see for the school's students…such changes might include safer halls, more empathetic teachers, or improved discipline policies that recognize the reasons behind a student's behavior.*"[7]

How does a trauma-sensitive approach to creating a safe and supportive environment help a student to learn? It is first important to clarify that creating a safe and supportive environment refers to more than physical safety. It also includes both social and emotional safety. Students need to know that they will be listened to, protected, and taken seriously. A school should strive to provide "*structure and limits that provide a sense of safety through predictable patterns and respectful relationships, with adults in charge who convey confidence – through tone of voice, demeanor, a calm presence during transitions, and in other subtle and over ways – that they will maintain each student's feeling of safety in the school*"[8]

How is a safe and supportive environment created? Below are **several strategies** to employ at the classroom or school level, at a community-based organization, or even during daily one-on-one interactions with a student that will promote a trauma-sensitive environment that is safe and supportive - physically, emotionally, and socially.

---
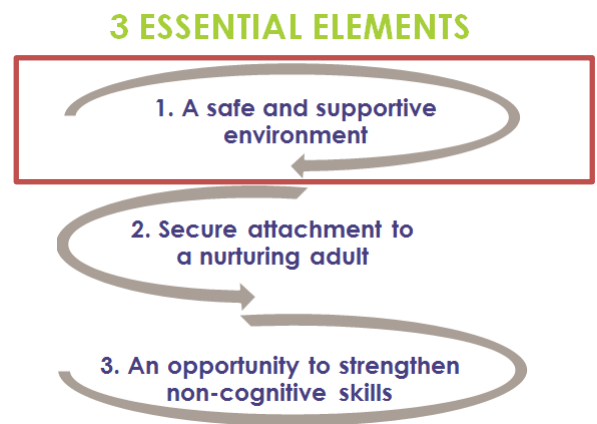
[6] Trauma Learning and Policy Institute – Massachusetts Advocates For Children, 2014

[7] "*Helping Traumatized Children Learn (Vol. 2): Creating and Advocating for Trauma-Sensitive Schools*"; Trauma and Learning Policy Institute in collaboration with Massachusetts Advocates For Children; Pg. 37

[8]"*Helping Traumatized Children Learn (Vol. 2): Creating and Advocating for Trauma-Sensitive Schools*"; Trauma and Learning Policy Institute in collaboration with Massachusetts Advocates For Children; Pg. 21

EMPATHY	<u>HOW</u>: Approaching a student with empathy is one of the most effective ways to establish emotional safety for someone experiencing trauma. Empathy is not the same as sympathy – it doesn't mean "feeling sorry" for the student or "excusing" any negative behavior. Rather, being empathetic means making an effort to understand without judgment or reservation. You can demonstrate empathy in a variety of ways. • **Actively listen** – Ask open-ended questions (*i.e. "can you tell me more about that?"*) and leave time for the person to respond. Silence is okay. Paraphrase what you heard the person say to make sure you understood what he/she was trying to communicate (*i.e. "I'm hearing that you are feeling overwhelmed by what is happening with your siblings right now."*). • **Normalize the reaction to an experience** – Help the child realize that anything he/she is feeling is a normal and natural response to a specific circumstance (*i.e. "It is normal to feel angry in this situation"*). Don't discount what he/she is feeling or saying by saying things like "it's not that big of a deal" or "everything is going to be fine." • **Minimize self-blame** - Focus on the question "what happened to you" rather than "what is wrong with you?" Children who are living in adverse conditions may come to believe that their experiences are a direct result of something they did (*i.e. "Dad wouldn't get violent if I didn't bother him with questions."*). Minimizing self-blame is an important step in creating emotional safety and support. • **Avoid giving advice** – This may seem counter-intuitive, but when we give advice, we are often projecting our own morals, ideas, or experiences onto another person without actually listening to what they are saying. Instead, guide a student towards identifying his/her own feelings, coming up with potential strategies, or simply letting him/her "talk it out." <u>WHY</u>: Children experiencing trauma often feel isolated, afraid, or ashamed. Approaching a situation with empathy reassures the child that they are having a normal reaction to an abnormal experience. It creates a foundation of trust, productive conversations, and collaborative problem solving rather than knee-jerk reactions to a behavior.
STRENGTHS-BASED APPROACH	<u>HOW</u>: Taking a strengths-based approach empowers children *and* adults by helping them to focus on their strengths and assets (everyone has something!) rather than weaknesses - real or perceived. Helping a student develop confidence in his/her own abilities is much more effective than operating with a "rescue" frame of mind. Operating from a position of strength and positive reinforcement creates both emotional and social safety as the student learns what he/she has to offer and applies those skills towards school work, joining a school club, behaving appropriately in class, etc. A few strategies for taking a strengths-based approach include: • **Deliberately point out actions and characteristics that are positive, unique, or valuable**. This tactic is especially helpful within the context of a difficult situation (*i.e. "Getting your siblings ready for school every morning is a huge responsibility and you show a lot of time management and maturity in doing that."*)

	• **Guide a student towards recognizing and using his or her strengths**. Students in temporary housing often demonstrate resilience or the ability to adapt. Those strengths can be used to build additional skills. • **Redirect a challenging behavior by focusing on what you know the student can do well** (i.e. *"You are a natural leader and other students pay attention to you. Instead of making other kids laugh during class, why don't you lead by showing them how to listen quietly and talk at appropriate times."*) WHY: Children who have experienced trauma may think that they are bad or unworthy in some way. They may also be "living down" to low expectations from parents, teachers, and/or other adults. Despite how it may appear at times, children want to behave well and will do so when they know how. When children are supported in recognizing their own strengths, most will then apply their energy towards continuing to grow that strength rather than acting out, withdrawing, or engaging in other detrimental behaviors.
PREDICTABILITY	HOW: Having a sense of what is happening next or how a person will likely react in a given situation provides physical, emotional, and social safety. Students with unstable home lives may lack structure and can benefit from the safety and support that an organized, predictable, and calm classroom/school provides. It goes beyond the classroom and even the school building though. Anyone who interacts with a student in temporary housing and/or a student who has been traumatized can provide a sense of safety and predictability by taking the following actions: • **Be clear about expectations** – Articulate what a student can expect from you and what you expect from him/her. This includes expected behavior, methods and frequency of communication, homework rules, where to go or what to do if a problem arises, etc. • **Follow through** – Creating a predictable environment for a student means being reliable. Make sure that you can follow through on any promises you've made or task you said you would complete. If it seems like something is going to change, make sure to check-in with that student and tell him/her about it. Even the simple act of staying in contact provides a sense of safety and security. • **Keep a consistent routine** – Post and review a daily schedule, classroom and hallway rules, transition time norms, etc. If you are a social worker or counselor, try to keep consistent appointment times, office hours, contact numbers, etc. Knowing what is going to happen next reduces anxiety and creates a sense of safety for students who have experienced trauma. • **Talk through changes** – Meeting new people, starting a new semester/class, or going through a change to the daily routine can be very stressful for a traumatized student. Even the most predictable person and/or routine will need to change sometimes so be sure to talk through any changes with the student ahead of time to avoid surprises and unnecessary stress. WHY: For students in temporary housing, predictability is often hard to come by. For students who have been traumatized, predictability becomes even more important as their nervous systems are always on "high alert" *(i.e. a fast resting heartbeat, ever-present stress hormones, high blood pressure*) and can easily become

	overloaded when surprised. Being predictable provides a sense of safety and security for the student that can keep his/her nervous system operating on more of a level playing field.
FOCUS ON PREVENTION RATHER THAN PUNISHMENT	<u>HOW</u>: Students who have experienced trauma likely have triggers (known or unknown) that can set off negative behaviors. They may also lack developmentally appropriate coping and/or self-regulation skills. Many times, behaviors that appear to be defiant, disruptive, or aggressive are actually a student's way of seeking connection and support – counterintuitive as that may seem. Rather than punishing a student, a safe and supportive environment focuses on prevention. This doesn't mean that there aren't rules or boundaries. Rules and boundaries are important (remember predictability and expectations). A few ways to create a safe and supportive environment through a focus on prevention include: **Help the student identify triggers and create appropriate coping plans** - It is helpful if triggers can be avoided all together, but if they can't (which is likely the case), teaching a student how to self-regulate (i.e. calm down) when triggered can prevent further negative behavior. Talk about self-regulation strategies such as deep breathing, counting silently, sitting on one's hands, playing with a bean bag, etc. You may also want to make a plan of where the student should go and/or who the student should talk to when they become overwhelmed (*i.e. "when you feel like you are going to explode, I want you to hold up one finger to signal to me that you need to go sit in the nurse's office for 5 minutes to calm down*). **Teach or demonstrate what "should" be done** – Prevention is NOT about controlling behavior or emotions. Rather, it is about helping students learn what an appropriate response looks like and more importantly, helping them learn what their triggers are and ways to self-regulate. **Avoid punishment and isolation** - Many students who have experienced trauma already feel isolated, ashamed, and unsupported. While it is common practice to send a disruptive student out of the classroom, this actually makes things much worse for a traumatized student. It can re-traumatize by bringing those feelings of isolation to the surface. Having a system of rules and consequences that focus on improving behavior rather than punishment (isolation) will reinforce that the school is a safe and supportive environment. Appropriate consequences should be logical (*i.e., warnings and reminders of expectations, lost privileges, Behavior Intervention Plans (BIP), etc.*) **Reward positive behavior to encourage and build confidence** – It is often said that kids will do well if they know how. Children naturally want the attention of adults so if the teacher/adult can give attention for positive behavior, the student learns what he/she should be doing and will likely continue the desired behavior in order to continuing receiving attention. **Teach mindfulness –** Mindfulness is easy to teach, free, and very effective. Being mindful is as simple as focusing on your breath in order to become more aware of your own thoughts, emotions, physical sensations, and environment. It may seem too simple to be helpful, but teaching a student to step back and breathe when he/she is starting to feel agitated can help prevent that initial agitation from taking over and becoming a full-

	blown outburst. There is a sense of emotional and social safety associated with self-awareness, control, and calm. WHY: Because trauma has negative biological, psychological, and social impacts, a traumatized student doesn't always have the ability to manage his/her emotions and behavior. The "fight/flight" response is always on and punishment (especially isolation) only makes the situation worse. Focusing instead on prevention teaches a student to have more control over his/her own thoughts, emotions, and behaviors, which in turn, creates a sense of safety. Keep in mind that a system of prevention can, and should, be a school-wide endeavor as it is beneficial for all kids.
WELCOMING BUILDING ENVIRONMENT	HOW: This one is probably the most obvious strategy for creating a safe and supportive environment. In order to concentrate and learn, a student must first feel physically safe. The following strategies can be applied to a classroom, school building, counselor's office, family shelter, or any number of other locations. **Make sure that classrooms and hallways are bright and clean** – Make sure that all lights are working, restrooms are clean, and walls are painted calming colors. You may even consider involving students in painting murals or picking out artwork. **Don't corner someone** - Avoid any furniture set-up that puts a person in a corner, blocks an entry/exit, or could be experienced as claustrophobic. **Consider having a "safe corner" or a "peace room"** – Having a place for a student to go if he/she if feeling unsafe, agitated, or aggressive can be helping in creating a safe and supportive environment. The idea is that before acting-out or blowing-up, a student learns to recognize his emotional state and remove himself from the situation for 10-15 minutes to calm down. He should then be ready to return to class. The "safe corner" or "peace room" should be a welcoming environment that the student chooses to go to… it is not a "time-out" or punishment. **Greet students at the door** – The simple act of having an adult stand at the school entrance, classroom door, lunch-room door, etc. to greet students demonstrates that you know they are there and will protect and care for them. **Make sure transition times are supervised** – Passing periods, lunch-time, bus loading/unloading can all be stressful situations and can at times feel unsafe. Make sure an adult is always present and that the adult is overseeing the situation, but not yelling. WHY: Traumatic experiences very often threaten a child's physical safety. Dark hallways, closed doors, or crowds may trigger a post-traumatic stress response. For a traumatized student, a lot of energy and attention goes into protecting oneself (keeping an eye out for danger) rather than learning. Creating a safe environment and continually reinforcing that safety will help a student shift attention towards the task at hand.

CONNECTION TO SCHOOL COMMUNITY	<u>HOW</u>: For a student in temporary housing, finding school stability and genuine connection to a community can be a huge challenge. Social support is as important as material support and provides a sense of emotional and social safety. For children, many aspects of that social support start with school. To help a student find a sense of connection and belonging, schools can try the following strategies. • **Institute a peer buddy program** – When a new student arrives, connect him/her with a volunteer peer buddy. That buddy may do things like help the new student find the lockers, offer to sit with him/her at lunchtime, invite him/her to join a game at recess, check-in once a week to see how things are going, etc. • **Institute a student/adult mentorship program** – It is very important for students to have at least one adult in the school that they trust and can go to. Mentoring programs help facilitate these relationships by carving out time to talk. Each mentor should commit to at least one 15-minute meeting per week with the student. This time can be used to talk about school goals and progress, strategize about the future, or simply "hang out." The important piece is that the relationship is open, ongoing, and provides a sense of social safety for the student. • **Deliberately connect students to extracurricular activities** – Take the time to ask a student about his/her interests and strengths (*this goes back to the strengths-based approach*). Based on what the student says, connect him/her with elective classes, teams, before and after-school activities, or other groups that might be a good match. Show genuine interest in the student by following up to see how things are going. Being involved in group activities is one of the best ways to build social safety and support. • **Use a team approach** – Strong school and community connections often involve many people. Build relationships with community-based organizations in the area for collaborative programming and/or referrals. Make sure to have some type of communication plan that allows information to be passed from the community organization back to the school. The same holds true for multiple people within the school; make sure there is an opportunity to check-in once in a while to discuss the student. <u>WHY</u>: Traumatic experiences can negatively impact how a person feels about themselves. Those negative self-perceptions make it difficult to find and keep connections. Without social supports, a person is at higher risk for isolation, depression, and academic failure, among other things. Helping a student to find and maintain connections is a very effective way of providing a safe and supportive environment.
PARTNERSHIP, NOT POWER	<u>HOW</u>: A safe and supportive environment is one in which partnership is valued over power. This does not mean that there aren't any rules or authority figures, but rather, it means that the approach to creating a functional school environment is about community and collaboration rather than punishment. Ideally, students will behave appropriately because they feel a responsibility to the school community of which they are a part rather than because they fear punishment.

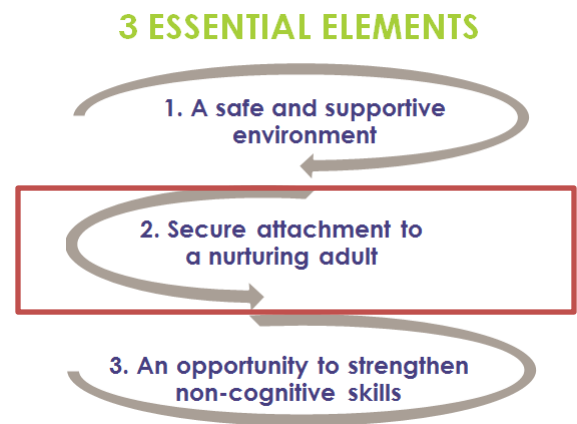|	
	• **Avoid power/control struggles** – Fighting for control only re-traumatizes. Avoid phrases like "tough love" or "because I said so." Instead, try to understand the reason for behavior and adjust your strategy accordingly *(i.e. collaborative problem solving, tactile distractions, safe spaces or peace corners)*. • **Do not "corner" someone emotionally** – Just as you wouldn't want to corner someone physically, don't corner them emotionally either. Don't use something they've disclosed to you against them and avoid making the student feel emotionally vulnerable (i.e. *if you find out the student has been drinking, don't respond by making reference to his parents' drinking problem if that is something he has shared in the past*). • **Help individual students find coping strategies for stressors –** This is related to the strategy of prevention rather than punishment. Instead of asserting control, it is more effective to partner with the student to come up with a plan for identifying triggers and coping strategies. For example, maybe the student keeps a small photo collage of things she loves tucked away in her desk and pulls it out when she needs to be reminded that her current stress will pass and she will feel happy again. Having a coping strategy will help the student to feel emotionally safe because they have more control over their own feelings as well as socially safe because they feel they have a partner (the teacher or other adult) to help them sort it out. WHY: For many people who have been traumatized and have nervous systems on high-alert, an authority figure asserting power and/or control can feel threatening and actually escalate the problem rather than solve it. It is much more effective to take a tone and approach of partnership in resolving conflict.

Now, let's move on to the second essential element for school success, secure attachments.

FOSTERING SECURE ATTACHMENTS:
THE IMPORTANCE OF STABLE AND CARING RELATIONSHIPS

Throughout childhood and adolescence, children benefit tremendously from the secure attachments they have with adults. In many cases, the adult is a parent or caregiver, but it doesn't necessarily have to be. Healthy attachments help children learn to[9]:

- Regulate emotions and self-soothe
- Develop trust in others
- Explore their environment freely
- Understand themselves and others
- Understand that they can have an impact on their world

3 ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

1. A safe and supportive environment

2. Secure attachment to a nurturing adult

3. An opportunity to strengthen non-cognitive skills

Not only are these skills important for everyday functioning, they are critical to being successful in school.

However, students who have experienced trauma often do not form secure attachments with adults. This absence of attachment can lead to feelings of hopelessness, helplessness, self-blame, and a lack of control (or perceived control) over a child's own life. Trauma and/or toxic stress have an "*impact on a child's self-perception and worldview [that] can get carried into the classroom, where it can interfere with the ability to process information and maintain control over behaviors and emotions*[10]."

The good news is that there is something you can do to combat the negative impact of not having secure attachments. If a student does not have a secure attachment to the adult(s) with whom he/she lives, it is imperative that the student feels a strong attachment to an adult at school. Sometimes this will happen naturally, but there are also **deliberate strategies** you can use to form (or facilitate) a secure attachment between a student and an adult.

MENTORING	HOW: Mentoring programs can be set-up within a school for little or no cost and can have a hugely positive impact on students. Some schools assign each teacher to 10 mentees and require weekly one-on-one check-ins. Other schools create small group settings (*i.e. advisory, homeroom, etc.*) in which the teacher/mentor follows a focused curriculum with the group. When it comes to creating secure attachments, long-term relationships and in-depth interactions are best. However, even short, but consistent, interactions (*i.e. 2 minutes a day to say "Good morning, I'm glad you're here today"*) can be beneficial. No matter what the specifics are, mentoring programs have the ability to nurture those attachments. A few things that mentors should keep in mind: • **Be available** - For example, schedule 15 minutes of one-on-one with a specific student time every Wednesday at recess. If regular meetings aren't

---

[9] National Center on Family Homelessness, 2006

[10] "*Helping Traumatized Children Learn (Vol. 1): A Report and Policy Agenda*"; Trauma and Learning Policy Institute in collaboration with Massachusetts Advocates For Children; Pg. 2

possible, let a student know when and how he/she can reach you (or find you) and be sure to respond.

- **Be consistent –** An important aspect of a secure attachment is the knowledge that you can rely on a person. By being consistent (in your instructions, attitude, schedule, follow-up, interactions, etc.), a student will build the trust needed for a healthy relationship.
- **Make sure the student knows that he/she can go to you in a crisis** – For many students who have experienced trauma, a crisis may trigger feelings of self-blame or helplessness. Make it clear to the student that he/she may share both positive and negative thoughts with you without judgment or retribution.
- **Encourage self-motivation** – As a mentor, your job is to "help the student to help himself." In other words, you want to help the student find his own reasons for wanting to succeed rather than doing something "because he has to do it." You can do this by asking questions (*sometimes, leading questions*), rather than giving direct advice or "telling" the student what is best for him.
- **Help students set goals and create strategies for reaching those goals** – Using empathy and a strengths-based approach, talk to the student about what she wants to achieve and come up with strategies for how to get there. Be sure the student knows that if she doesn't meet the goal on the first try, it is okay. You will work with her to come up with new strategies until she does meet the goal.

WHY: Whether it is formal or informal student/mentor relationship, having consistent interactions with a student will help to create a sense of attachment. Especially for a traumatized student who may see the world as fundamentally unsafe, this healthy and secure relationship will provide a sense of safety and consistency that in turn allows the student to turn his/her energy and concentration towards learning.

HELP CHILDREN IDENTIFY SAFE PEOPLE TO TALK TO IN THE SCHOOL	HOW: Children who have not had the opportunity to form secure attachments with the adults in their lives may see all adults as a threat. In order to begin forming secure attachments, students need to know who they can talk to and trust. You can help a student to identify and reach these key people by taking the following actions: • **Post the names and roles of key school staff** – Make sure that the names of the Principal, AP, school nurse, guidance counselors, social workers, etc. are familiar to all students. Schools should also consider posting names of cafeteria staff, bus drivers, and/or lead teachers. The more places you can post these names, the better. Repetition will help the information to sink in. • **Let students know HOW to contact a safe adult** – It isn't enough to simply tell students who the "safe people" are. They also need a variety of ways to contact those adults. Posting emails and/or phone numbers for key adults is one way to do it. Certain staff may also consider holding office hours. For more sensitive situations, guidance counselors and/or social workers might want to have locked boxes placed around the school or outside of an office for students to discretely slip notes into requesting help.

	• **Set clear expectations and boundaries** – Students need help knowing who to go to for different types of situations. This is where expectations and boundaries come in. For example, even though the Principal is a safe person, it isn't realistic for students to come to her with every problem. Certain issues may be better directed towards the student's mentor or a school counselor. Be candid and clear about who a student should go to for what. If a student does come to you, never brush them off or pass judgment, but rather, re-direct him/her to someone who can help. WHY: Children experiencing homelessness and/or trauma often have nervous systems that are constantly on high alert, causing the student to become easily overwhelmed. Without a secure attachment to an adult, these feelings can be terrifying as the student believes he/she is alone to deal with them. Knowing which adults in the school are available to them will help to facilitate secure attachments and feelings of safety.
BE PATIENT AND CONSISTENT	HOW: Students experiencing on-going trauma or toxic stress have often grown accustomed to being let down or disappointed by the adults in their lives. Their defiant, challenging, or seemingly rude behavior can actually be a "test" to see how far your support will really go. In other words, will you keep your word that you are there to help? When building a secure attachment, it is incredibly important to be patient and consistent even in the face of resistance. A few ways to do this include: • **Give unconditional support** – This doesn't mean that you are allowing a student to get away with anything. Rather, unconditional support means that your effort to support them won't suddenly stop because of something they said or did. Support might include helping a student understand why something they did was wrong or unacceptable, but the focus is on conveying that you know they can do better and helping them figure out how to do it. • **Set high expectations –** Set consistently high expectations and then be patient as the student learns to meet them. It likely won't happen on the first try, but as a student sees that you (as the adult) are not giving up on their capacity to do better, the student will rise to the challenge. • **Lead by example** – It is an old adage, but still rings true. Students watch what we do more than listen to what we say. Being patient and consistent in your actions will help the student form the secure attachment needed to succeed. WHY: Without secure attachments, children will not develop a sense of trust toward adults. They will not feel safe to explore, learn, or make a mistake, which hinders healthy development. Having a secure attachment to an adult who exhibits patience and consistency sets the stage for a safe environment and goes a long toward increasing a student's ability to engage in school and learn.
FAMILY PROGRAMMING	HOW: It is certainly beneficial for a student to have a secure attachment to an adult at school, but it is even better if they *also* have a secure attachment to a caregiver (*i.e. parent, family member, and/or other person in a caregiver role*). A school can help facilitate that attachment (when safe and appropriate) by making a concerted effort

	to include/involve caregivers past the traditional parent/teacher conference nights. For example: • **Host family nights or other events** – In some cases, family nights are entertainment focused (i.e. movie night) and in other cases, family night may actually be a class for caregivers to learn about communicating effectively with teenagers, how to help a student prepare for life after high school, or any number of other topics. Either way, these open invitations can be a good way to introduce caregivers to the school community and also aid in a student repairing and/or strengthening another important relationship. • **Make an effort to meet the caregivers where they are** – This can mean physically and/or emotionally. Not all caregivers are able to physically get to the school because of transportation or job barriers. Alternatively, they may be hesitant to get involved because they fear judgment. Either way, try various means of communicating with caregivers and also be sure to communicate when things are going WELL for the student. Hearing what a student is doing right can be a great entry point for a caregiver to join the school community and strengthen his/her relationship with the student. • **Don't engage in negative conversation about a family** – When a student is coming from a challenging family environment, he/she may complain or say negative things about family members. Certain stories will be difficult to listen to, but you want to find a way to listen, show empathy, and normalize the experience without adding fuel to the fire. Steer the conversation toward what you will do to support or protect the student, but don't engage in "parent/caregiver bashing" as that will only hurt the relationship further. Of course, if the situation is serious enough to warrant outside intervention, take the appropriate steps of a mandated reporter *(i.e. call CPS/State Central Registrar if necessary)*. WHY: The more adults that a child feels attached to, the better. More attachments means more support, more safety, and more opportunities to develop a healthy sense of self. No matter the situation, caregivers play an important role in a child's life and ideally there is a secure attachment there. Fostering secure attachments between students and school staff as well as between students and caregivers should be a priority whenever possible.
HELPING A CHILD TO COPE	HOW: Healthy coping skills are vital for children and adults alike. The way that we deal with stress, disappointment, anger, anxiety, etc., all involve coping strategies. Perhaps not surprisingly, children without a secure attachment to an adult are at risk for developing negative coping skills such as substance abuse, dissociation, or other self-harming behaviors. Within the context of a secure attachment, it falls on the adult to help a child find ways to cope. A few examples of healthy coping techniques that can be taught within a secure relationship include: • **Breathing for relaxation** – Breathing; it is simple, effective, and FREE! While breathing is a natural function of everyday life, using it as a coping strategy involves a more intentional approach. When a student feels overwhelmed, teach him to place a hand on his stomach and breathe deeply so that his stomach expands into his hand. Count to 3 while inhaling and count to 3 while exhaling. This slow and mindful breathing will almost

immediately slow down a student's heartbeat and nervous system, allowing him to approach the situation more calmly and rationally.

- **Positive distractions** – When a child is feeling overwhelmed, providing a distraction can help calm him/her down enough to then deal with the issue at hand. For many young children, a tactile/sensory distraction works well (*i.e. koosh balls, squishy stress balls, rubber bands, bean bags, etc.*). Some schools have "sensory closets" or "calm down corners" where these types of items are stored and accessible to students. For older students, consider additional techniques such as letting them step out into the hallway to listen to music for 5 minutes. Usually, a student will calm down within 5-10 minutes and be able to return to learning.
- **Promote leadership** – Helping a student to see his/her leadership potential is a great way to build confidence as well as continue fostering a secure attachment (*i.e. trust, reliability*). When a student comes to see himself as a leader, he will increase his confidence, self-trust, engagement, commitment, and resiliency - all qualities that can double as coping strategies. For younger students, leadership might mean feeding the class fish every day. For older students, leadership might be striving for team captain on a sports team. No matter the situation, help the student see his strengths and how they can be applied to a positive leadership role rather than negative behaviors.
- **Encourage peer support** – Peer relationships are often more influential than any other. As you build your own relationship with a student, keep an eye out (or ear open) for what they are interested in and opportunities to connect the student to positive peer interactions (*i.e. teams, clubs, activities, etc.*).
- **Ensure children have a healthy diet** – It is difficult for anyone to concentrate or even think rationally when they are hungry. Make sure that the student is signed up for free breakfast and lunch through your school or district. Also consider having healthy snacks available (*i.e. granola bars, fruit snacks*) and/or setting up a local donation program for weekend food backpacks.
- **Ensure children have plenty of exercise** – Exercise releases endorphins, reduces anxiety, and is simply a great coping strategy. One obvious way of doing this is helping connect the student with an athletic team or activity. If you are acting as the student's mentor, perhaps suggest that you take a walk during mentor meetings or play a sport. You can also think outside the box – for example, one school assigned landscaping responsibilities to a particular student (at his request), which provided an opportunity not only for exercise, but also leadership and confidence building as he saw the fruits of his labor.

WHY: Healthy coping skills play an important role in a child's ability to learn and succeed. If a child is constantly overwhelmed by his/her feelings, he/she will not be able to devote attention or energy to learning. Similarly, if a child's coping mechanisms include negative behaviors, he/she may experience consequences or punishments that are also detrimental to learning (*i.e. being sent out of the class to the Principal's office.*) Within the safety of a secure attachment, a child can learn healthy coping skills, which will then leave him/her more available for learning.

USE A TEAM APPROACH	<u>HOW</u>: One of the most important pieces of forming a secure attachment is the opportunity to trust and rely on others. As mentioned earlier, the more adults that a student comes to rely upon, the better. If you are the person who has taken the lead on forming a secure attachment with a student (formally or informally), use a team approach to expand the developmental benefits of secure attachments. • **Stress inclusiveness and shared purpose** – When talking with the student, take every natural opportunity to stress that everyone in the school has a shared purpose and that purpose is to see him/her succeed. You might be the person who the student goes to most often, but help the student understand that his/her support network is extensive. • **Share updates and successful strategies with other staff as appropriate** - Without divulging privileged information, help other teachers/adults to understand a student's situation, needs, and effective strategies. Work together to support the student (*remember, it could be as easy as saying hello and making eye contact when the student walks into the classroom*). The last thing you want is for a student to have a great experience in one classroom only to fall apart elsewhere. <u>WHY:</u> In a school setting, every adult is pulled in a thousand different directions. It is difficult to find the time and energy to dedicate to all students. Taking a team approach can divide the responsibility of supporting a students and will also teach the student that it is possible (and healthy) to have secure attachments to several adults (*i.e. to trust that adults in general will protect him/her and have his/her best interest in mind*).

We will now move on to the final element of the school success framework, having the opportunity to strengthen non-cognitive skills.
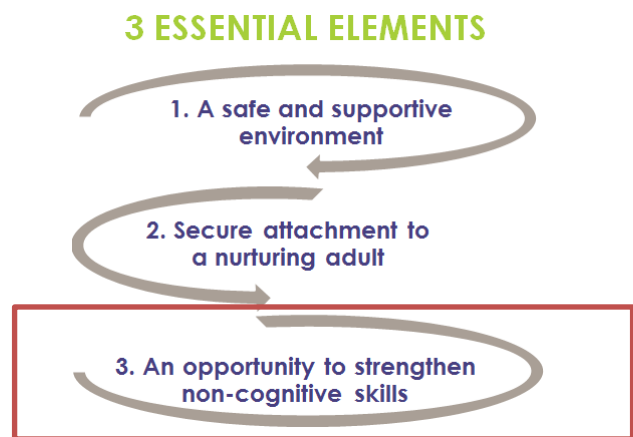
STRENGTHENING NON-COGNITIVE SKILLS (I.E. SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SKILLS):
Becoming More Ready and Available to Learn

The strengthening of non-cognitive skills is often referred to as social-emotional learning. It refers to the development of skills such as[11]
- self-management
- self-awareness
- responsible decision-making
- relationship skills
- social awareness

You may also have heard words like resilience, grit, or confidence (*among others*) used in the context of social-emotional learning.

3 ESSENTIAL ELEMENTS

1. A safe and supportive environment

2. Secure attachment to a nurturing adult

3. An opportunity to strengthen non-cognitive skills

Non-cognitive skills are critical to the success of a student. They are foundational to a student's ability to engage, concentrate, and participate, which in turn leads to academic success (*i.e. cognitive or hard skills*).[12] If a student does not have the skills to process and cope with significant social and/or emotional barriers, those barriers can easily manifest into challenging behavior at school and stop classroom learning in its tracks. Learning requires "*attention, organization, comprehension, memory, the ability to produce work, engagement in learning, and trust. Another prerequisite for achieving classroom competency is the ability to self-regulate attention, emotions, and behavior[13].*"

As mentioned before, children who have experienced trauma and/or toxic stress have nervous systems that are constantly on "high alert." This can make it much more difficult for a student to self-manage his emotions and therefore, he may be more prone to "acting out" in class when provoked by a seemingly small trigger (*i.e. being asked to sit and read silently for 30 minutes*). However, a student with strong non-cognitive skills will be able to identify when he is feeling agitated (*i.e. using emotional and physical cues*) and will ideally have a strategy to calm himself down before the outburst happens at all. Strong non-cognitive skills help a student remain available to learn.

The good news is that similar to academic skills like math or reading, non-cognitive skills can be taught, practiced, and perfected. The following are strategies to help a student strengthen his/her non-cognitive skills which will, in turn, allow him/her to cope, engage, and learn.

---

[11] CASEL (Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning), 2014

[12] Nagaoka, Jenny, et al., 2013

[13] "*Helping Traumatized Children Learn (Vol. 1): A Report and Policy Agenda*"; Trauma and Learning Policy Institute in collaboration with Massachusetts Advocates For Children; Pg.22

FOCUS ON "WHAT HAPPENED TO YOU" RATHER THAN "WHAT IS WRONG WITH YOU"	<u>HOW</u>: When a child acts out in class for seemingly "no reason," the instinctual question is "what is wrong with you?" However, it is important to remember that there is always some kind of reason behind every action, outburst, or negative behavior. Children who have been traumatized may already believe they are bad, incapable, or not worthy of positive attention. When someone asks, "what is wrong with you," it reinforces that negative self-image and perpetuates the behavior. Instead, ask "what happened to you" as a way of finding/understanding the reason for the behavior and then coming up with strategies to avoid it happening again. • **Ask more questions and listen to the answers** – A child or teenager likely won't be able to articulate what happened or why they did something, especially if they are still upset. Take the time to ask several smaller questions to try and lead the student toward understanding happened. For example, "tell me what happened right before the incident." "Did someone say something to you?" "Why do you think they said that to you?" Remember to listen without judgment and help the student arrive at his/her own answer. • **Watch for patterns and triggers** – Many traumatized students will have one or more triggers; something that causes their nervous systems to flood (*it could even be Post Traumatic Stress Disorder*). A trigger can be a smell, sound, a tone of voice, or any number of things. Sometimes, watching for patterns in the student's behavior can be helpful in identifying the trigger and then avoiding it. For example, does the student seem to lose control when the fire alarm goes off? Or, does the student seem to lose control when someone refers to him by his full name instead of a nickname? • **Keep in mind the student's history** – While nobody expects every teacher, counselor, and school staff member to know a student's family history or situation, do your best to keep it in mind if you do know it! Be empathetic to the student's home life and think about how it might be affecting him/her before jumping to conclusions about "why" a behavior might have happened. You may also want to share relevant information with other teachers or staff members in a manner that allows for consistent support from all adults working with the student. <u>WHY</u>: If a student has experienced trauma, it is never their fault, but they may feel as though it is. Trauma has enormously negative impacts on a child's psychological and social well-being. Asking "*what is wrong with you*" implies that it is their fault and only makes it worse. Traumatized students need to heal and rebuild in order to succeed. Some of that healing will need to take place with trained mental health professionals, but simply making a mind-shift toward "*what happened to you,*" when you are interacting with a student will make a difference.
ENCOURAGE RESILIENCY	<u>HOW</u>: Being able to "bounce back" or to continue moving forward despite setbacks and challenges is vital to a student's success in school. Many children who are experiencing toxic stress or trauma are actually more resilient than those who have not out of necessity. This resiliency is something that should be focused on and further developed. • **Focus on strengths, not deficit** - Focusing on a student's strengths rather than deficits is something that is beneficial within all three elements of the school success framework. In terms of non-cognitive skills, focusing on a

student's strengths means explicitly pointing out what they are good at (*i.e. an academic subject, a creative endeavor, making others feel included, taking care of siblings, etc.*). When a student starts to see what he/she has to offer, confidence grows and extends into other aspects of the student's life and promotes resiliency.

- **Praise effort, not just outcomes** – If we want students to "keep trying," we have to praise their effort. Positive reinforcement works at all ages, but it is the positive reinforcement of effort than encourages resiliency. A student needs to see the connection between the effort he puts in now and future outcomes. He also needs to know that he can improve, bounce-back, make it through, etc.
- **Focus on "should" rather than "should not"** – Similar to prevention rather than punishment, adults should help students understand what they "should" do rather than only pointing out what the student "should not" do. Students are much more likely to "do the right thing" when they know what that "right thing" is. As the student begins to improve, she should receive praise for that behavior or action and subsequently, her confidence and resiliency will continue to grow.

WHY: Students with challenging home lives have likely seen, heard, and experienced a lot. Those negative experiences are likely to continue and in some cases, even worsen. Without resiliency, students may give up, drop out, or struggle in a variety of other ways. Building a strong sense of resiliency will not only help a student make his/her way through school, but will also equip him/her with vital skills to continue through other aspects of life.

TEACH COPING TECHNIQUES	HOW: Everyone will experience challenges (big and small) and everyone will cope in some way, shape, or form. It is the coping *technique* that matters. Is it positive and effective or is it negative and ineffective? By teaching positive coping techniques, you are giving a student the tools that he/she needs to better handle the stressors in life and turn energy and attention towards learning.

- **Talk about self-soothing** – There are many healthy ways to sooth yourself when upset, anxious, or stressed. Different techniques will work for different students, but giving a variety of choices will help them feel confident in their own ability to calm down. You may want to suggest breathing exercises, listening to a specific song, rolling a smooth rock or small ball around in their hands, counting backwards slowly, sitting in a bean bag chair, hugging oneself, etc.
- **Talk about self-regulation** – Self-regulation refers to someone's capacity to controls impulses. It is behaving in a healthy and positive way whether or not someone is watching, which is obviously critical to success in school and life. In addition to simply talking about positive self-regulation, teachers can help develop the skills by making sure class expectations are clear and friendly, as well as helping students to stay engaged in an activity. For younger students, teaching self-regulation it may be rooted in play (*i.e. following rules of a game*) while for older students it can be more rooted in self-responsibility and future success (*i.e. through explicit conversations about these topics*).
- **Help the student identify triggers and strategies** – We've mentioned this one before, but it is worth reiterating. If a student understands his/her triggers and has strategies at hand to calm-down, many behavior problems can be avoided all together. Take the time talk about patterns in behavior with the

	student and come up with strategies to calm down together. Revisit those strategies periodically to make sure they are working. • **Show students where/how they have control** – Sensing that you have zero control is one of the most stressful feelings anyone can have. Students who are experiencing trauma usually feel no sense of control or order in their lives, which is why you want to give them opportunities to have control in a variety of ways. "Control" can range from small to large choices such as choosing a snack to getting an after-school job. The important thing is to show the student where, how, and when he has a chance to control his own situation, behavior, and reaction. WHY: When students have reached the level of toxic stress or trauma, their coping mechanisms often rely on negative techniques such as dissociation, aggression, substance abuse, etc. Teaching positive coping techniques will give students the tools they need to regulate and sooth while avoiding unhealthy behaviors (or at least change paths towards more positive techniques.)
EMPOWER STUDENTS	HOW: Victims of trauma often feel disempowered. Helping a student to feel empowered and realize their own potential has a tremendous ability to help them succeed in school. Help a student feel empowered by showing that you have trust and confidence in them. You also want to empower them to be able to make decisions for themselves and follow through. You can do this by: • **Encourage intrinsic motivation** – If a student is doing something positive *only* because they fear punishment or *only* because they want to please you, they risk stopping the positive behavior when the risk or reward is gone. Building intrinsic motivation is setting the student up for long-term success. Do this by helping students to see the connection between effort and success both short term and long term. For example, start with something small like connecting the 5 minutes a student spends at night putting his backpack together with a smoother morning the next day. • **Build self-confidence** – Self-confidence is foundational to almost all of the strategies listed in this toolkit. Traumatized students often lack confidence because they've been put down so many times emotionally or physically. Help a student build confidence by pointing out strengths, unique contributions, positive behaviors, etc. Make sure the student knows that you will be there to support them along the way to success, whatever that path might bring. • **Promote leadership** – Leaders feel empowered to direct others and also direct themselves. Being a leader strengthens confidence, responsibility, social interaction, and many other skills that are directly related to school success. Consider putting the student in charge of feeding the classroom fish or encouraging her to run for student government. Large or small, helping a student to see where she has the skills and opportunity to lead will empower her in both direct and indirect ways. WHY: The two key elements of trauma are helplessness and terror; both of which are extremely disempowering. Feeling disempowered can lead to depression, substance abuse, negative self-image, etc. Empowering students in small and large ways will slowly change their view of the world and of themselves, which is a first step towards school success.

Recap and Next Steps

You have now read through an overview of trauma-sensitivity as well as strategies for implementing each of the three essential elements of the school success framework. As a reminder, the goal is not to incorporate every single strategy. Rather, we hope that you will keep the impact of trauma in mind when working with students and will use (or teach others to use) the recommended strategies to create an effective learning experience for students who have experienced trauma and/or homelessness.

Trauma sensitivity is an important topic that will continue to be incorporated into all aspects of NYS-TEACHS work: resources, webinars, workshops, etc. We will also offer training sessions devoted to trauma-sensitivity and school success.

Remember to access all our trauma-sensitivity and school success resources at
http://www.nysteachs.org/schoolsuccess.html.

Finally, on the next page you'll find a "matrix of school success framework strategies." Please use it as a reference tool or "cheat sheet" of all strategies covered in this toolkit. You may want to share the matrix with others during trainings, post a copy in a public place, or use it for yourself as a quick reminder of strategies.

Thank you for all that you do to support students in temporary housing as well as those experiencing trauma.

Matrix of Trauma-Sensitive Strategies of School Success

Essential Element	Strategy	Related Action
Creating a Safe and Supportive Environment	Empathy	- Actively Listen - Normalize the reaction to the experience - Minimize self-blame - Avoid giving direct advice
	Strengths-based approach	- Deliberately point out actions and characteristics that are positive, unique, or valuable - Guide a student towards recognizing and using his or her strengths - Redirect a challenging behavior by focusing on what you know the student can do well
	Predictability	- Be clear about expectations - Follow through - Keep a consistent routine - Talk through changes
	Prevention rather than punishment	- Help the student identify triggers and create appropriate coping plans - Teach or demonstrate what "should" be done - Avoid punishment and isolation - Reward positive behavior to encourage and build confidence - Teach mindfulness
	Welcoming building environment	- Make sure that classrooms and hallways are bright and clean - Don't corner someone - Consider having a "safe corner" or a "peace room" - Greet students at the door - Make sure transition times are supervised
	Connection to school community	- Institute a peer buddy program - Institute a student/adult mentorship program - Deliberately connect students to extracurricular activities - Use a team approach
	Partnership, not power	- Avoid power/control struggles - Do not "corner" someone emotionally - Help individual students find coping strategies for stressors

Fostering Secure Attachments	Mentoring	• Be available • Be consistent • Make sure the student knows that he can go to you in a crisis • Encourage self-motivation • Help students set goals and create strategies for reaching those goals
	Help children identify safe people to talk to in the school	• Post the names and roles of key school staff • Let students know *how* to contact a safe adult • Set clear expectations and boundaries
	Be patient and consistent	• Give unconditional support • Set high expectations • Lead by example
	Family programming	• Host family nights or other events • Make an effort to meet the caregivers where they are • Don't engage in negative conversation about a family
	Helping a child to cope	• Breathing for relaxation • Positive distractions • Promote leadership • Encourage peer support • Ensure children have a healthy diet • Ensure children have plenty of exercise
	Use a team approach	• Stress inclusiveness and shared purpose • Share updates and successful strategies with other staff as appropriate
Strengthening Non-Cognitive Skills (*i.e. social-emotion skills and self-regulation.*)	Focus on "what happened to you" rather than "what is wrong with you"	• Ask more questions and listen to the answers • Watch for patterns and triggers • Keep in mind the student's history
	Encourage resiliency	• Focus on strengths, not deficit • Praise effort, not just outcomes • Focus on "should" rather than "should not"
	Teach coping techniques	• Talk about self-soothing • Talk about self-regulation • Help the student identify triggers and strategies • Show students where/how they have control
	Empower students	• Encourage intrinsic motivation • Build self-confidence and promote leadership

References:

Anda, Robert F. MD, MS (with the CDC); Felitti,Vincent, MD (with Kaiser Permanente) (2003); Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) Study; www.acestudy.org and http://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/

Coates, John, McKenzie-Mohr, Sue; Department of Social Work St. Thomas University (2010): *Out of the Frying Pan, Into the Fire; Trauma in the Lives of Homeless Youth Prior to and During Homelessness.*

Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning (CASEL) (2013): *CASEL Guide; Effective Social and Emotional Learning Programs.*

Duckworth, Angela, et al.: Frontiers in Psychology (Jan. 2013): *Life Stress Impairs Self-control in Early Adolescence:* Vol. 3, Article 608

Ginsburg, Kenneth M.D. (2011): *Building Resilience in Children and Teens*

Greene, Ross, Ph.D. (2008): *Lost at School; Why Our Kids with Behavioral Challenges are Falling Through the Cracks and How We Can Help Them*

Massachusetts Advocates for Children: Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative in collaboration with Harvard Law School (2005). *Helping Traumatized Children Learn: A Report and Policy Agenda.*

Massachusetts Advocates for Children: Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative in collaboration with Harvard Law School (2005). *Helping Traumatized Children Learn: Creating and Advocating for Trauma-Sensitive Schools.*

Masten, Ann, et al; Journal of Child Development: *Academic Achievement Trajectories of Homeless and Highly Mobile Students: Resilience in the Context of Chronic and Acute Risk*

Nagaoka, Jenny, et al. Voices in Urban Education (2013): *Readiness for College: The Role of Non-cognitive Factors and Context*

National Bureau of Economic Research: James Heckman and Tim Kautz (2012): *Hard Evidence on Soft Skills*

National Center on Family Homelessness: Ellen Bassuk M.D., Kristine Konnath LISSW, Katherine Volk M.A. (2006): *Understanding Traumatic Stress in Children.*

National Center on Family Homelessness: *Trauma-Informed Organizational Toolkit for Homeless Services*

National Center for Homeless Education: Jan Moore (2013): *Research Summary, Resilience and At-risk Children and Youth.*

National Center for Homeless Education: Jan Moore (2013): *Research Summary, Teaching and Classroom Strategies for Homeless and Highly Mobile Students.*

National Center for Homeless Education: Beth Garriss Hardy, Ph.D. (2010): *Educating Homeless Children and Youth: Conducting Needs Assessments and Evaluation Services; A guide for SEAs, LEAs, and Local Schools.*

Obradovic, Jelena (Stanford University, 2012) : *How can the study of physiological reactivity contribute to our understanding of adversity & resilience processes in development: (*Development and Psychopathology 24, Pages 371-387)

Obradovic, Jelena: Standford University: Journal of Child Development (Feb. 2010, Vol. 81, Number 1, Pages 270-289): *The Interactive Effects of Stress Reactivity & Family Adversity on SE Behavior & School Readiness*

Urban Institute: Mary Cunningham, Robin Harwood, Sam Hall (2010): Metro Housing and Communities Center- *Residential Instability and the McKinney-Vento Homeless Children and Education Program*

Ziol-Guest, Kathleen, McKenna, Claire: Journal of Child Development (2013): *Early Childhood Housing Instability and School Readiness:* (Vol. 00, Number 0, Pages 1-11)